

UNCLASSIFIED

ROUTINE

UNCLASSIFIED

INCOMING

ACTION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ARA/NEA REARCSR193 26016
RELEASED IN FULLPAGE 01 OF 03 CARACA 02237 00 OF 04 231841Z 025054 507714Z
ACTION: VE (02)

CARACA 02237 00 OF 04 231841Z 025054 507714Z

INFO: CD (02) B1 (01) PE (01) DAND (02) EC (01) CU (02) RJ (01)
PMO (01) JRH (01) EBS (01) ARA (01) PPC (01) DAS (01) PPA (01)
EPSC (04) DEPSC (01)

23/1905Z AI HAH (TOTAL COPIES: 024)

ACTION ARA-00

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-00 ACDE-00 AID-00 AMAD-01 ACQ-00 DDEF-00
SRPP-00 BS-00 EB-00 UTEB-00 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00
IB-00 LAB-01 L-00 AOS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 DIC-02
DMB-01 OPIC-01 PA-00 PH-00 PRS-00 P-00 SP-00
STR-00 YRSE-00 T-00 PMB-00 DSCG-00 PRM-01 DRL-04
G-00 FDC-01 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /024W
-----577CED 231856Z /38R 231838Z JUL 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1221
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
USINT HAVANA
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
SEGDEF WASHDC
USCINCSB MIAMI FL
USIA WASHDC 1661

UNCLAS CARACAS 002237

E.D. 12958: OECL: N/A
TAGS: PHUM, PGDV, PREL, VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES SPEAK ON HUMAN RIGHTS

SUMMARY

1. VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ADDRESSED HUMAN RIGHTS NGO'S DURING A CONFERENCE HELD JULY 14-16 IN CARACAS. TOPICS DISCUSSED INCLUDED: JUDICIAL REFORM, PRISON REFORM, IMPUNITY, AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS. THE CONFERENCE WAS SPONSORED BY: THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP), AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY. CANDIDATES IRENE SAEZ, MIGUEL RODRIGUEZ, AND HUGO CHAVEZ ATTENDED. NEITHER HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER NOR LUIS ALFARO UCERO ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE, BUT INSTEAD SENT CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVES TO ADDRESS THE CONFERENCE. THE FAILURE OF THESE CANDIDATES TO PARTICIPATE WAS DENOUNCED BY HUMAN RIGHTS NGO'S AND CRITICIZED IN PRESS REPORTS AS REFLECTING A FAILURE TO MAKE HUMAN RIGHTS A PRIORITY FOR THEIR PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS. END SUMMARY.

IRENE: "INTEGRATED SECURITY" TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS

2. IRENE SAEZ, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF I.R.E.N.E., THE RADICAL CAUSE (ICR), AND THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL (CDPEI) PARTIES, FRAMED HER DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN HER BROADER PROPOSAL TO OFFER VOTERS "INTEGRATED SECURITY." UNDER THE RUBRIC OF "INTEGRATED SECURITY," SAEZ DECLARED THAT SHE WOULD STRIVE TO SECURE VENEZUELAN'S NOT ONLY FROM THE VAGARIES OF ENDemic VIOLENT CRIME, BUT WOULD ALSO WORK TO "GUARANTEE PEACE AND DEMOCRACY FOR ALL" BY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH-CARE, ENSURING QUICK JUSTICE IN CASES OF IMPUNITY, PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT, AND CARING FOR THE LESS

FORTUNATE OR ABLE -- WOMEN, CHILDREN, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, THE POOR, AND THE HANDICAPPED. SOME OF HER PROPOSALS INCLUDE: COMBATING

POVERTY BY FIGHTING "INFLATION WHILE SAFEGUARDING JOBS" AND BOOSTING ECONOMIC GROWTH, PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE, SEEKING HEALTH FOR ALL CITIZENS, FIGHTING CRIME, AND PURSUING A GOVERNMENT THAT SERVES ITS CITIZENS. SAEZ'S PLAN FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS WERE AMONG THE MOST EXTENSIVE OF THE CONFERENCE. SHE EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR AN EDUCATION SYSTEM ENCOMPASSING NUTRITION PROGRAMS, SPORTS, HEALTH-CARE, AND TRAINING SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO MEET DIVERSE DEMOGRAPHIC NEEDS.

3. WHILE MOST OF SAEZ'S PRESENTATION WAS SHORT ON DETAILS, ON EDUCATION SHE DID, FOR EXAMPLE, STATE THAT SHE PLANS TO ALLOCATE 7% OF GDP TO EDUCATION, TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL DAYS AND INCORPORATE HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION INTO THE CURRICULUM. ASKED IF SHE WOULD RENEGOTIATE FOREIGN DEBT TO FREE RESOURCES TO AMELIORATE VENEZUELA'S HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, SAEZ CAUTIOUSLY RESPONDED THAT RENEGOTIATION OF THIS DEBT IS IMPORTANT, BUT CHOSE TO EMPHASIZE EFFORTS TO FURTHER DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY, AND TO DECENTRALIZE AND "DECONGEST" THE BUREAUCRACY TO MORE EFFECTIVELY DISTRIBUTE CURRENT GOV RESOURCES. IN CONTRAST TO OTHER CANDIDATES, SAEZ DECLARED THAT HER GOVERNMENT WILL PROVIDE PUBLIC FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO NGO'S. SHE BELIEVES THE GOV MUST WORK ALONGSIDE NGO'S TO COMBAT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, AND COMMITTED HERSELF TO WORKING CLOSELY WITH NGO'S THROUGHOUT HER ADMINISTRATION.

4. SAEZ EXPRESSED STRONG SUPPORT FOR JUDICIAL REFORM. SHE PLANS TO CONTINUE TO DECENTRALIZE THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM, AND VIEWS THIS, IN PART, AS A WAY TO BREAK ALLIANCES BETWEEN JUDGES AND POLITICAL PARTIES. TAKING A PAGE FROM U.S. PRACTICE, SAEZ PROPOSED SUBJECTING HER JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS TO CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS THAT

WOULD BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. SAEZ ALSO WISHES TO STRENGTHEN THE INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY OF THE SUPREME COURT, AND WILL SEEK WAYS TO OPEN THE NOMINATION AND CONFIRMATION PROCESS CASTING LIGHT ON WHAT IS NOW AN OPAQUE, PARTY-DRIVEN SYSTEM.

5. WITH RESPECT TO PRISON REFORM, SAEZ ANNOUNCED THAT SHE WOULD MERGE THE MINISTRIES OF JUSTICE AND INTERIOR WHILE SPINNING OFF RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRISONS TO A NEW INDEPENDENT, AUTONOMOUS AGENCY. THE NEW MINISTRY, MEANWHILE, WOULD FOCUS ON "PREVENTIVE SECURITY." RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WHETHER OR NOT SHE WOULD PRIVATIZE PRISONS WERE VAGUE, BUT SHE DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY. SAEZ ALSO DECLARED THAT SHE WOULD SEPARATE PRISONERS AWAITING TRIAL FROM THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY CONVICTED, AND INDICATED THAT SHE WOULD ESTABLISH MINIMUM, MEDIUM, AND MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISONS. ADVOCATING TRAINING AND WORK PROGRAMS WITHIN THE PRISONS, SAEZ SAID THAT THE PRISONS NEED TO SERVE A PRODUCTIVE PURPOSE AND TO PREPARE PRISONERS FOR LIFE AFTER PRISON.

MIGUEL RODRIGUEZ: THE MILTON FRIEDMAN ANSWER TO HUMAN RIGHTS

6. APERTURA PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MIGUEL RODRIGUEZ SEES

VENEZUELA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS AS DEPENDENT UPON "ACCELERATED AND SUSTAINED" ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE IS COUNTING ON VENEZUELA'S NATURAL RESOURCES TO PROVIDE THIS ECONOMIC GROWTH. HIS IDEAL FOR THE COUNTRY WOULD BE A MIDDLE CLASS POPULATION EDUCATED FOR WORK AS WELL AS IN CULTURE, ART AND SPORT. THIS ECONOMIST, AND ARCHITECT OF PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ'S (CAP'S) ECONOMIC PROGRAM,

ESSENTIALLY ARGUES THAT A RISING TIDE WILL LIFT ALL BOATS -- THAT A VIBRANT GROWING ECONOMY WILL PROVIDE THE RESOURCES TO ADDRESS HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER PROBLEMS. INDEED, RODRIGUEZ APPEARS TO BELIEVE THAT MOST OF VENEZUELA'S HUMAN RIGHTS DIFFICULTIES WOULD SIMPLY DISAPPEAR IF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WERE BETTER.

CHAVEZ: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO THE RESCUE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

REVIEW AUTHORITY: ADOLPH H. EISNER

DATE/CASE ID: 16 NOV 2009 200505634

UNCLASSIFIED

010099

Box 3

UNCLASSIFIED

ROUTINE

UNCLASSIFIED

INCOMING

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ARA/NEA REARCS

PAGE 02 OF 03 CARACA 02237 00 OF 04 231841Z 025054 5077142

CARACA 02237 00 OF 04 231841Z 025054 5077142

PREDICTS, WOULD OFFER CITIZENS UNIFORM GUARANTEES OF PROTECTION, AS OPPOSED TO VARIATIONS ACROSS MUNICIPALITIES. SUCH UNIFORMITY FOLLOWS HIS THEME OF EQUALITY FOR ALL CITIZENS WITHOUT DISCRIMI-

7. GREETING HIS "FRIENDS IN THE FIGHT (COMPAÑEROS EN LA LUCHA)," FORMER COUP LEADER HUGO CHAVEZ RECALLED THE LAST TIME HE WAS IN THE AUDITORIUM AT THE ATENEO WHERE THE CONFERENCE WAS HELD -- MARCH 25, 1994, THE DAY HE WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON. CHAVEZ IS THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF: THE FIFTH REPUBLIC MOVEMENT (MVR), THE HOMETOWN FOR ALL (PPTI) PARTY, AND THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS SOCIALISM (MAS) PARTY. CHAVEZ CREDITED HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS WITH PROTECTING HIS LIFE AFTER HIS COUP ATTEMPT WAS THWARTED. HE SAID THAT, WHILE RUMORS FLEW THE DAY AFTER THE ATTEMPT THAT CHAVEZ HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE, IT WAS HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS THAT RALLIED THE PEOPLE TO PROTECT HIM. CHAVEZ COMMENTED THAT HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS "SOCIAL FIGHT" FOR YEARS. IN SHORT, CHAVEZ VIEWS HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS AS HIS NATURAL ALLIES.

8. TURNING TO THE PRESENT, CHAVEZ DECLARED THAT HE BELIEVES THAT IN THIS MODERN AGE THAT THE RIGHTS AND WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN "RELEGATED TO LAST PLACE" AMIDST TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND MACROECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS. CHAVEZ SAID, "MAN NEEDS TO BE THE CENTER OF ALL POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY." DECLARING HIMSELF TO BE NEITHER OF "THE EXTREME LEFT NOR RIGHT," CHAVEZ STATED THAT HIS MOVEMENT IS "HUMANIST." PROCLAIMING THAT HIS

MOVEMENT CALLS FOR AN "INTEGRATED VISION TO FULFILL THE EXISTENCE OF MAN," CHAVEZ EXPLAINED THAT HE REJECTS HOBBS' STATEMENT THAT "MAN IS THE LION OF MAN," ACCEPTS NIETZSCHE'S BELIEF THAT MAN IS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN MAN AND THE SUPERMAN, AND STRIVES FOR JESUS CHRIST'S GOAL THAT "MAN IS THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA."

9. CHAVEZ OFFERED THIS AS A PRELUDE TO HIS ASSERTION THAT "THE STATE IN VENEZUELA HAS EXHAUSTED ITSELF." ACCORDING TO CHAVEZ, VENEZUELA'S DEMOCRATIC MODEL, BASED UPON THE "PUNTO FIJO" PACT, HAS RUN ITS COURSE. QUOTING ROUSSEAU, CHAVEZ SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BROKEN ITS SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH SOCIETY, AND THAT SOCIAL EXISTENCE HAS BEEN REDUCED TO A DARWINISTIC MAN-TO-MAN FIGHT. (YES, HE QUOTED DARWIN TOO.) "NOBODY IS GOING TO MANIPULATE OR TRICK ME -- THIS IS NOT A DEMOCRACY. THIS IS A MASK THAT HIDES HIDEOUS (NON-DEMOCRATIC) THINGS," DECLARED CHAVEZ.

10. TO DELIVER VENEZUELA FROM ITS TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS AND TO RESTORE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, CHAVEZ PROPOSES HOLDING A REFERENDUM ON THE QUESTION OF CREATING A "CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CONSEJUEANTE)." IF APPROVED, THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS OF THIS ASSEMBLY WOULD BE TO DISMANTLE CONGRESS. ACCORDING TO CHAVEZ, ONLY SUCH A DRAMATIC REFORM CAN RESTORE CREDIBILITY IN THE STATE, AND RESPECT FOR ITS LEADERS AND LAWS. OUT OF THIS CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WILL EMERGE A NEW "SOCIAL CONTRACT" THAT WILL ESTABLISH A "HUMANIST DEMOCRACY."

11. IN A BRIEF MENTION OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, CHAVEZ SAID, "THANK GOD THIS IS A MULTIPOLAR WORLD." CHAVEZ OPINED THAT ONCE VENEZUELA HAS RENEWED ITSELF THROUGH THE CLEANSING PROCESS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, VENEZUELA WILL ONCE AGAIN ESTABLISH ITSELF AS AN IMPORTANT POLE OF POWER IN THE WORLD, AND WILL PROJECT ITSELF ON

TO THE WORLD STAGE.

12. THOUGH CHAVEZ ECHOED OTHER CANDIDATES' CONCERN FOR THE NEED FOR JUDICIAL REFORM, PRISON REFORM, AND GREATER PROTECTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, CHAVEZ OFFERED NO TRUE STRUCTURE OR PLAN TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES. CHAVEZ SIMPLY RESPONDED THAT DURING HIS CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL WALKS OF VENEZUELAN LIFE WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCES AND TO PRESENT PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE. HE STATED, WITHOUT ELABORATION, THAT HE PLANS TO INITIATE A BASIC HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM FOR ALL CITIZENS. HE BRIEFLY MENTIONED THAT REORGANIZING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM WOULD REQUIRE AN INCREASE IN EXPENDITURES, BUT OFFERED NO EXPECTED FIGURES. CHAVEZ ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN ABOLISHING MUNICIPAL POLICE SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO CENTRALIZE THE POLICE FORCE. THIS, HE

NATION.

13. CHAVEZ WILLINGLY ENGAGED IN OPEN DIALOGUE WITH THE NGO'S PRESENT AND PROPOSED A FUTURE DIALOGUE SESSION WITH THOSE INTERESTED. HE ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY HIMSELF AS A MODERATE, POPULIST SUPPORTER OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY FOUNDED ON THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF A SOCIAL CONTRACT. HE FAILED TO DETAIL HIS PLANS FOR ADDRESSING HUMAN RIGHTS, AND PREFERRED INSTEAD TO TAKE ON BOARD MOST QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE AT A LATER DATE. INDEED, CHAVEZ WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE DOES NOT HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS, AND THAT HE IS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING. CHAVEZ USED THE CONFERENCE AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SOLICIT THE SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

OF NGO'S IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS CAMPAIGN AND TO SECURE SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. HE AGREES WITH THE NGO'S THAT PROBLEMS EXIST, BUT BELIEVES THE SOLUTION WILL MYSTICALLY EMERGE FROM THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, NOT FROM A CAREFULLY PLANNED POLICY AND EXECUTIVE APPARATUS.

NGO'S GRANTED UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS WORRIES TO CHAVEZ

14. THE CONFERENCE ALLOCATED AN EXTRA HOUR TO CHAVEZ'S QUESTION-ANSWER PERIOD TO PERMIT REPRESENTATIVES OF EACH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP IN ATTENDANCE TO APPROACH THE STAGE TO EXPLAIN THE LEADING CONCERNS THAT EACH GROUP HAS WITH CHAVEZ'S PROGRAM. WHILE THIS ADDITIONAL FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND CHAVEZ HIGHLIGHTS THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCERNS MANY OF THESE NGO'S HAVE WITH CHAVEZ, IT ALSO REVEALED THAT CHAVEZ HAS SUPPORT AMONG LESSER KNOWN, GRASSROOTS, AND FRINGE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO'S. THOUGH NGO'S APPEARED EXCITED BY THIS OPPORTUNITY, THEIR QUESTIONS APPEARED INHIBITED. FEW VENTURED TO ASK THE UNDERLYING QUESTIONS THAT NGO'S SURELY HOLD REGARDING CHAVEZ AS AN INDIVIDUAL; MOST QUESTIONS COULD HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO ANY CANDIDATE. GIVEN CHAVEZ'S MILITARY CAREER AND ATTEMPTED COUP ATTEMPT, ONE NGO MEMBER EXPRESSED THE CONCERN THAT CHAVEZ'S GOVERNMENT WOULD BE AUTOCRATIC. CHAVEZ REPLIED THAT ONE NEEDS TO LOOK AT THE TYPE OF MILITARY OFFICER CHAVEZ WAS -- AN OFFICER WHO WAS SUPREMELY CONCERNED WITH THE WELL-BEING OF HIS TROOPS AND OF THE PRIVATE CITIZEN. WHILE ONE WOULD COULD ARGUE THAT THE RECORD OF A FORMER COUP LEADER SPEAKS FOR ITSELF ON THE MATTER OF WHETHER OR NOT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL BE AUTOCRATIC, CHAVEZ DOES NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF TO BE A COUP LEADER. DEFLECTING ATTENTION FROM THE COUP ATTEMPT, CHAVEZ ASSERTED THAT IT

IS MORE IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER WHAT HE REVOLTED AGAINST -- A CORRUPT, BANKRUPT DEMOCRACY THAT HAD BROKEN ITS SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH SOCIETY.

SALAS ROMER'S POSITION ACCORDING TO ENRIQUE OCHOA ANTICH

15. REPRESENTING HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER, ENRIQUE OCHOA ANTICH ASSERTED THAT "ONLY A SOCIETY THAT CAN CREATE WEALTH CAN ESTABLISH RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS." PLACING HIS FAITH IN THE NEOLIBERAL ECONOMIC POLICIES, OCHOA DECLARED THAT SALAS STANDS FOR "OPENING (APERTURA)" AND "MARKET REFORM." SEEKS TO ENGAGE "GLOBALIZATION," AND REJECTS STATISM AND SOCIALISM. THOUGH CLEARLY A CHAMPION OF PRIVATE INITIATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL EFFORT, OCHOA NONETHELESS SAID, "THE STATE HAS AN OBLIGATION TO RESERVE FUNDS AND RESOURCES FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSE." BUILDING UPON THIS GLOBALIZATION THEME, OCHOA STATED THAT VENEZUELA NEEDS TO RESPOND TO INTERNATIONAL REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA. ACCORDING TO OCHOA, SALAS WILL SEEK TO ESTABLISH A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH

UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

ROUTINE

UNCLASSIFIED

INCOMING

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ARA/NEA REARCS

PAGE 03 OF 03 CARACA 02237 00 OF 04 231841Z 025054 507714Z
INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS HUMAN RIGHTS
WATCH, AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. ON THE ISSUE OF PRISON REFORM,
OCHOA INDICATED THAT SALAS PROPOSES PRIVATIZING THE PRISON SYSTEM
"TO EFFECTIVELY EXPLOIT OPPORTUNITIES AND TO HARNESS THE POTENTIAL
OF ENTREPRENEURS" TO REMEDY THIS COMPLEX PROBLEM.

ALFARO UCERO'S POSITION ACCORDING TO PAULINA GAMUS

16. DEMOCRATIC ACTION (AD) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ALFARO UCERO WAS

REPRESENTED BY AD CONGRESSIONAL DEPUTY PAULINA GAMUS. IT WAS OFTEN
UNCLEAR, UNFORTUNATELY, WHETHER GAMUS WAS SPEAKING STRICTLY ON
ALFARO'S, HER OWN, OR THEIR PARTY'S BEHALF. THE PRESS CRITICIZED
HER PRESENTATION AND DIALOGUE AS NON-SUBSTANTIVE, LEAVING MANY
NGO'S QUESTIONS UNANSWERED.

17. THOUGH GAMUS EXPRESSED A NEED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REFORM, SHE
FAILED TO MENTION SPECIFIC REFORMS ALFARO WOULD IMPLEMENT.
ACKNOWLEDGING THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN VENEZUELA'S BEPLORABLE
PRISONS, GAMUS ASSERTED THAT MEANINGFUL ANSWERS WOULD BE FOUND ONCE
GOVERNORS AND MAYBRS TOOK AN ACTIVE ROLE. SHE PREDICTED THAT

ALFARO'S GOVERNMENT WOULD PURSUE PRISON PRIVATIZATION. GAMUS
AGREED WITH THE IMPORTANCE OF JUDICIAL REFORM, BUT BLAMED JUDGES'
FINANCIAL CONNECTIONS TO LAW FIRMS RATHER THAN TO POLITICAL PARTIES
AS THE SOURCE OF JUDICIAL CORRUPTION. HER APPROACH TO CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS WAS CONSERVATIVE. GAMUS IS A PROPONENT OF FAMILY
RESTRUCTURING AS A MAIN FACTOR IN ADVANCING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS. SHE
STATED A NEED FOR INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME
IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN ORDER TO INCREASE SOCIAL
CONSCIOUSNESS AT AN EARLY AGE.

COMMENT

18. THIS CONFERENCE WAS IMPORTANT FOR THREE REASONS. FIRST, IT
DEMONSTRATED THAT NGO'S ARE ALIVE, IF STRUGGLING, IN VENEZUELA.
NGO DEVELOPMENT IN VENEZUELA HAS BEEN GRADUAL, BUT IS VITAL FOR THE
STRENGTHENING OF VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY AND SOCIETY. SECOND, THE

CONFERENCE DEMONSTRATED THE AUDIENCE PARTICIPANTS' COMMITMENT TO
HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS IN VENEZUELA. SUCH RESOLVE IS ESSENTIAL TO
RAISE THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES BOTH WITHIN THE
VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY AT LARGE. FINALLY, AND MOST
IMPORTANTLY, THE CONFERENCE TOOK ANOTHER STEP TOWARD IMPROVING,
FORMALIZING, AND DEEPENING DIALOGUE BETWEEN NGO'S AND VENEZUELAN
GOVERNMENT. CREATING SUCH DIALOGUE HAS BEEN A SLOW AND ACIDICIOUS
PROCESS. IT HAS REQUIRED BREAKING DOWN SUSPICIONS AND ANIMOSITIES
BETWEEN NGO'S, THE GOVERNMENT, AND POLITICAL PARTIES. THE RESULT
HAS BEEN NASCENT COOPERATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, AND THE
STRENGTHENING OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE
EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY.

MA1570

UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED